

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 02298 181150Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----093089 181153Z /20
O 181102Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1352

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 2298

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, IS, EG,US
SUBJ: BEGIN'S SINAI PROPOSAL

REF: STATE 41126

1. WE MUST PROBABLY FACE THE REALITY THAT BEGIN HAS BEEN WRESTLING FOR SOME TIME WITH THE IDEA OF WITHDRAWING HIS SINAI PROPOSAL AS PRESENTED AT ISMAILIA. HE INTIMATED AS MUCH AS LONG AGO AS THE FAMOUS MEETING OF THE HERUT CENTRAL COMMITTEE ON JANUARY 8 (TEL AVIV 307). THE FACT IS, HIS PLAN HAS DONE HIM REAL POLITICAL DAMAG HERE, A RESULT THAT SHOCKED HIM INITIALLY AND HAS LEFT HIM BRUISED, PERPLEXED, AND FEELING VERY EXPOSED. IT HAS CREATED THE COHEN/SHAMIR CHINK IN THE SUPPOSEDLY IMPREGNABLE HERUT ARMOR; IT HAS PRESENTED ARIK SHARON WITH A VEHICLE SO SUITED TO HIS PECULIAR MIX OF ASSETS THAT HE HAS BEDOME A POLITICAL FORCE DESPITE HIS UNEVEN POLITICAL ABILITIES; IT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO GARNER SUPPORT FROM WITHIN LABOR CIRCLES, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE STRENGTH OF PRO-SETTLEMENT FORCES WITHIN LABOR, BUT BECAUSE THE BEGIN PLAN IS AT LEAST PERCEIVED AS GOING BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL LABOR PARTY POSITION ON THE SINAI.

2. WE CAN ASSUME, THEREFORE, THAT BEGIN HAS AT LEAST BEEN WEIGHING THE PROSS AND CONS OF LOOKING FOR A PROPITIOUS TIME TO WITHDRAW HIS PROPOSAL. HIS PRIMARY PURPOSE WOULD BE TO
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEL AV 02298 181150Z

RECOUP SOME DOMESTIC POLITICAL CAPITAL, BUT HE WOULD ALSO WISH TO ASSURE HIMSELF THAT HE COULD MINIMIZE THE PROSPECTS OF SUCH A MOVE BLOWING UP IN HIS FACE. FROM THE RATHER SKEWED ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE, THE EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEK HAVE SET A TEMPTING STAGE
-- THE
US IS NOW SEEN TO BE "SIDING WITH EGYPT" ON THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE

AND SAUDI ARABIA NOW CONSTITUTES A BONA FIDE "THREAT" BECAUSE OF THE F-15 OFFER. IF ONE IS LOOKING FOR MORE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE, SHIMON PERES ON FEBRUARY 16 REFUSED TO ADDRESS DCM'S QUESTION AS TO WHETHER HE WAS AWARE OF ANY GOVERNMENTAL INTENTION TO REVISE THE SINAI PROPOSAL, THEREBY SUGGESTING A CONFIDENTIAL AND PERHAPS SIGNIFICANT EXCHANGE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND BEGIN ON THIS SUBJECT. WE WOULD ALSO NOTE THAT BEGIN PERSONALLY ATTENDED A MEETING OF THE KNESSET DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ON FEBRUARY 17, NOT A ROUTINE OCCURANCE; ALSO, PERES CANCELLED AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE DCM FOR THAT DAY IN ORDER TO ATTEND THE SAME MEETING. WE DO NOT KNOW, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE FATE OF THE ISRAELI SINAI OFFER WAS ON THE AGENDA. THE INSTRUCTIONS IN PARA 2 OF REFTEL ARE THEREFORE TIMELY AND SHOULD HELP TO CONTAIN SOMEWHAT THE LOCAL CAPACITY FOR SELF-DELUSION.

3. OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT IS THAT BEGIN HAS THREE OPTIONS:

--HE CAN ANNOUNCE ANYTIME NOW THAT HE IS WITHDRAWING HIS PROPOSAL "UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW". THIS HAS TO BE TEMPTING TO HIM IN PURELY POLITICAL TERMS. SUCH A MOVE PROBABLY WOULD RECEIVE THE SUPPORT OF THE MAJORITY OF THE ISRAELI PUBLIC, NOT LEAST BECAUSE IT WOULD SHOW BEGIN MAKING A DECISIVE MOVE AND SEIZING THE

INITIATIVE FROM SADAT. IT COULD BE PORTRAYED AS A MOVE FORCED UPON HIM BY RECENT AMERICAN ACTIONS, WHICH BOTH RENDER "FREE"

,3&958-589, 8.09SSIBLE AND ALTER THE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 TEL AV 02298 181150Z

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF PLACES LIKE SHARM EL-SHEIKH. THE ISRAELIS MIGHT CALCULATE THAT WHATEVER DEGREE OF INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING SUCH ARGUMENTATION

MIGHT RECEIVE IS CURRENTLY AT ITS HEIGHT. IN SHORT, THERE ARE THOSE IN THIS GOVERNMENT WHO WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY ARGUE -- AND RECEIVE A FAIR HEARING -- THAT THE PLAN IS GOING TO HAVE TO BE MODIFIED AT SOME POINT AND NOW IS THE OPTIMUM TIME.

--SECONDLY, BEGIN CAN ATTEMPT TO RIDE OUT THE SINAI NEGOTIATIONS ON THE BASIS OF THE PROPOSAL CURRENTLY ON THE TABLE. THIS WOULD BE PRIMARILY ATTRACTIVE TO THOSE OF HIS ADVISORS WHO REMAIN CONVINCED THAT A SEPARATE AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT IS NECESSARY AND OBTAINABLE AND WHO WOULD THUS ALSO ARGUE THAT WITHDRAWING THE ISRAELI PLAN WOULD JEOPARDIZE THE CHANCES

TO ACHIEVE IT. MOREOVER IN ANY CONSIDERATION OF AN ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL BASED ON TERRITORIAL EXCHANGE, EMBARRASSING QUESTIONS WOULD BE RAISED CONCERNING EXACTLY WHAT TERRITORY EGYPT MIGHT BE OFFERED AND WHY EGYPT WOULD BE EXPECTED TO ACCEPT IT. BUT THERE WOULD BE MANY WHO WOULD REMIND BEGIN THAT HIS POLITICAL PROBLEMS ARE LIKELY TO INCREASE WITH TIME AS HIS "ALREADY OVERLY GENEROUS" OFFER FAILS TO DO THE JOB AND HE APPEARS IN THE PUBLIC MIND TO BE STYMIED.

--THE THIRD AND WE WOULD THINK VERY ATTRACTIVE, OPTION IS FOR

BEGIN TO COME TO WASHINGTON NEXT MONTH WITH HIS PROPOSAL INTACT BUT PRESUMABLY WITH AGREEMENT NO CLOSER. HE COULD THEN MAKE THE PITCH THAT, UNLESS THE US EITHER COMES UP WITH ITS OWN PROPOSAL WHICH WOULD ALLOW THE SETTLEMENTS TO REMAIN OR LEANS ON SADAT TO ACCEPT THEM, HE WILL WITHDRAW HIS PLAN. THIS WOULD BE NOTHING LESS THAN AN ATTEMPT ON HIS PART TO LAY THE BLAME FOR A BREAKDOWN IN NEGOTIATIONS SQUARELY AT THE FEET OF USG. IN SUCH AN EVENT WE WOULD ASSUME HE WOULD TAKE HIS CASE TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AS WELL. THIS OPTION HAS THE DUAL ADVANTAGE OF AT LEAST BLUNTING THE OBVIOUS DISADVANTAGES OF EITHER OF THE OTTHER TWO AND OF ASSOCIATING THE US WITH WHATEVER ULTIMATE DECISION IS MADE.

4. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT AT THIS POINT WHERE THE GOVERNMENT
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 TEL AV 02298 181150Z

WILL COME OUT ON THIS ONE. HOWEVER, WE SEE THE SECOND OPTION ABOVE AS THE LEAST LIKELY-- AND RECOMMEND THAT CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT BE GIVEN TO HOW WE WILL DEAL WITH THE THIRD.

5. FYI AMBASSADOR LEWIS IS IN THE SINAI THIS WEEKEND AND HAS NOT SEEN EITHER YOUR QUERY ON THIS SUBJECT OR THIS RESPONSE.
LEWIS

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, NEGOTIATIONS, PEACE PLANS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV02298
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840137-2018, N780002-0628
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780236/aaaabecq.tel
Line Count: 143
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 1e1a61d3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, ONLY
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, ONLY
Reference: 78 STATE 41126
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3544238
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BEGIN'S SINAI PROPOSAL
TAGS: PBOR, IS, EG, US, XF, (BEGIN, MENACHEM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1e1a61d3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014